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## MyPlate & Your Plate: What Should It Look Like?

Making food choices for meals and snacks can be difficult at times. What should I eat? How much should I eat? From how many different food groups should I eat? How can I help my child make good decisions about food selections? These are very important questions to ask and answer as you work to model and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The USDA (2011) developed MyPlate to assist with making healthier food choices. The MyPlate program provides a visual plate that includes the five different food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy products. MyPlate uses the visual plate model to help us as we make food selections for ourselves and as we teach our children about making healthy food choices. The model and information found at [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov) remind us to control food portions; avoid foods high in fat, sugar, and salt; and eat more fruits and vegetables (**half the plate should be fruits and vegetables**).



### References:

[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

[www.extension.org/pages/22833/your-child-may-be-a-choosey-eater-not-a-picky-eater](http://www.extension.org/pages/22833/your-child-may-be-a-choosey-eater-not-a-picky-eater)

<http://wicworks.nal.usda.gov/children/picky-eaters>

If your child is a picky eater and you are struggling with how to meet the MyPlate recommendations, consider the following suggestions:

#### •BE IN CONTROL

Provide food choices and allow your child to make decisions. For example, provide the child with a choice between two vegetables such as broccoli or carrots, or, for snack, a choice between sliced apples or orange wedges.

#### •BE A HELPER

Food preparation can be fun and educational for children. Help your child learn skills such as placing pre-bagged salad into individual salad bowls; washing vegetables and snapping or shelling peas and beans; and using child-friendly equipment, such as a potato masher to make mashed potatoes.

#### •BE ADVENTUROUS

Allow your child to assist with picking foods that are on your grocery list. While at the store, allow your child to pick a new food for the whole family to try at mealtime. Remember to provide the choice, but let the child make the decision, as he or she will be more likely to try the new food.

#### •BE POSITIVE

As your child is exposed to different foods and new food preparation methods, make sure that mealtime is positive. Small steps are important and appropriate for young children. A small taste of a new food is a great achievement! It can take up to 12 times for some children to accept new foods.



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